



CHESTERFIELD WFA

Newsletter and Magazine issue 54

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**Welcome to Issue 54 - the June
2020 Newsletter and Magazine of
Chesterfield WFA.**

**In view of the current public health
pandemic engulfing the globe, your
committee took the prudent
decision, before the introduction of
Government legislation, to cancel the
April, May and June Meetings of the
Branch.**

**Meetings and other activities will be
restarted as and when the authorities
deem it safe for us to do so.**

**In the interim this Newsletter / Magazine will
continue**

We would urge all our members to adopt all the
government`s regulations that way we can keep safe
and hopefully this crisis will be controlled, the virus
defeated, and a degree of normality restored.

Stay safe everybody – we are all – in the meantime -
`Confined to Barracks`

Grant Cullen – Branch Secretary



Western Front Association Chesterfield Branch – Meetings 2020

Meetings start at 7.30pm and take place at the Labour Club, Unity House, Saltergate, Chesterfield S40 1NF

January	7th	. AGM and Members Night - presentations by Jane Ainsworth, Ed Fordham, Judith Reece, Edwin Astill and Alan Atkinson
February	4th	Graham Kemp `The Impact of the economic blockage of Germany AFTER the armistice and how it led to WW2`
March	3rd	Peter Hart Après la Guerre Post-war blues, demobilisation and a home fit for very few.
April	7th	Andy Rawson Tea Pots to Tin Lids...how the factory which inspired his research (Dixons) switched from making tea services for hotels and cruise ships to making Brodie helmets in the Great War. CANCELLED
May	5th	Nick Baker . The British Army has always fought a long battle with the debilitating cause to its soldier's efficiency through venereal disease, a combination of behavioural change and civilian interference resulted in an 'epidemic' of VD which threatened military effectiveness. CANCELLED
June	2nd	Rob Thompson 'The Gun Machine: A Case Study of the Industrialisation of Battle during the Flanders Campaign, 1917. CANCELLED
July	7th	Tony Bolton `Did Britain have a Strategy for fighting the Great War or did we just blunder from crisis to crisis? "From business as usual to total war"
August	4th	Beth Griffiths `The Experience of the Disabled Soldiers Returning After WWI`
September	1st	John Taylor . 'A Prelude to War' (An Archduke's Visit) - a classic and true tale of `what if` ?
October	6th	Peter Harris Tanks in the 100 Days. Peter will present some of his researches for his Wolverhampton MA course
November	3rd	Paul Handford Women Ambulance Drivers on the Western Front 1914 - 1918.
December	1st	John Beech 'Notts Battery RHA - Nottinghamshire Forgotten Gunners'

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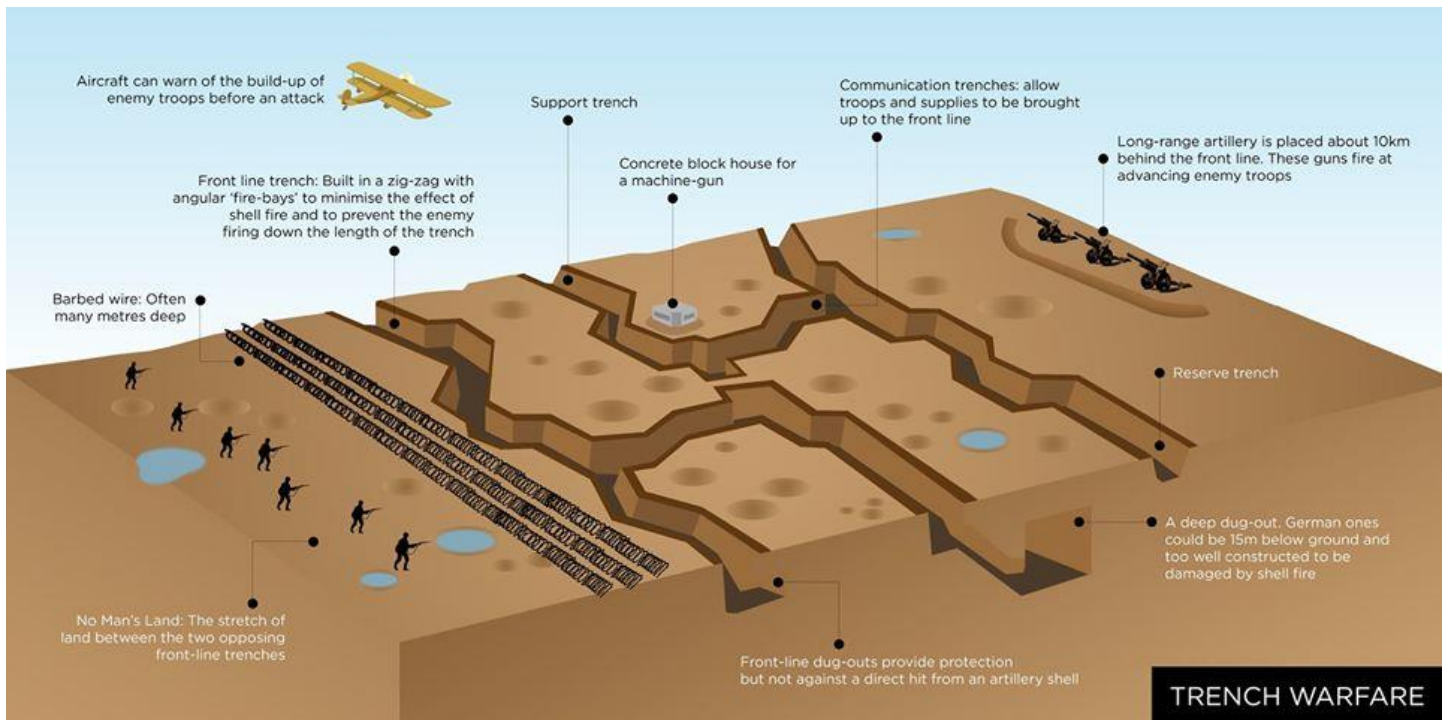
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Member Edwin Astill has sent a link to the Newcomen Society <https://us4.campaign-archive.com/?e=&u=4804d8a73cfe50eb50403fa51&id=e09ee8a4b0> He has attended meetings in the past where the topic has been of relevance to The Great War. I had hoped to be able to go along some time as well.....but.....hopes evaporated - for now

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Found this online. It's a bit simplified but gives a good overview of trench warfare.....





Personal Note from the Chair (44)

My wife and daughters regularly and almost every woman I have ever met, has at some time or another informed me that if you want a job doing then give it to a busy woman. In case you think that lockdown has driven me to misogyny, I should hasten to add that I have recently found that the opposite is equally appropriate. A man with plenty of time on his hands seems to find it difficult to do anything. Jobs, such as writing these notes takes me at least, far longer than normal as I keep putting it off until later on the basis that I have nothing to do later and will do it then. The result of this idleness has been a delay in getting these notes to Grant and a consequent delay in getting the Newsletter out to you for which I apologise.

I suppose like me you are all a bit fed up with lockdown, we all started with great enthusiasm to read those First World War books on the shelf which have stubbornly remained unread over the years or to decorate the kitchen, restyle the garden or carry out the research we have had in mind for some time. The novelty of having time to do these things has certainly worn off at least for your Chairman. Filled with enthusiasm nine weeks ago I started to read all the books I had bought as reference books for my MA at Birmingham and which I had only speed read. I started with George H Cassar's, *Kitchener -Architect of Victory* and I read about his early life which I had skipped when I first bought the book. There is no doubt that this has certainly fleshed out my view of this rather important soldier politician and I doubt that I would ever have got round to rereading the book without the enforced leisure.

As you know I serve on the national Executive Committee and during lockdown there has been a great effort to keep people engaged. Extra editions of Trench Lines have been issued and I for one have spent many hours watching some of the old silent films made at the time or shortly after the war. I hope you too have enjoyed some of the additional content. There have been some interesting ideas tried out from online research of pension records to quiz nights. When Grant suggested a 'virtual' meeting we found there was not much support but the idea has been resurrected as a joint project with Lincoln Branch. I have agreed to do the presentation and we will let you have the details via a special email with details of when and how to 'tune in', I understand there is a facility for you to ask questions just as you would at a normal branch meeting. The subject of the talk will be *Invasion Scares*, and this nicely brings me back to earlier in these notes as Kitchener was one of the people who actually expected the German army to invade the country.

Keep safe and do join the presentation as I would hate to be spending an hour talking to a blank screen.

Tony Bolton, Branch Chair



Secretary's Scribbles

Welcome to issue 54 of the WFA Chesterfield Branch Newsletter and Magazine.

Even although I finished working at the end of 2015, I still maintain the habit of rising early - 5.30am - but every day seems like `Groundhog Day` ...for those who remember the 1993 movie starring Bill Murray. Recent announcements by the Government regarding a gentle easing of the `lockdown` bring hope....or maybe as Winston Churchill said after Alamein in 1943.... `this is not the beginning of the end, it is the end of the beginning` ...certainly that could be the case economically speaking. As always, I hope all the recipients of his Newsletter/Magazine have kept safe and well. At least the May weather has been fine which has been a godsend for so many under tight restrictions, if you can at least sit out in the sun in the garden, that is at least something - certainly for folks with school age children the fine weather could not have come at a more opportune moment.

All Branch activities continue to be cancelled, it is not just us correctly adhering to the government instructions, but our venue too, is closed and we also need to be aware that it, like so many similar facilities, will be amongst the last to reopen. All of this is subject to review and we will of course adopt all measures going forward as instructed by the authorities.

I have been heartened by the number of contributions for inclusion in this Newsletter received from members and I am grateful to Andy Rawson, Jonathan D`Hooghe, David Tattersfield and Edwin Astill for taking the time to get in touch. All speakers whom we have had to cancel, will be offered new dates as soon as practicable.

Mark Macartney, WFA Branded Goods Trustee, reminds me that he has managed to put in place a system whereby some - not all - of the WFA branded items - are available. See Mark`s article which follows this editorial.

As Tony has mentioned in his notes, work continues apace to set up a `virtual` online meeting - this will be in conjunction with our friends at WFA Lincoln. It is likely that this will be held on the evening of June 15th ...everyone on this mailing list will be invited to participate as soon as all the details, log on procedure etc, is in place, tried out and tested.

Assuming that I don`t fall victim to the age - and we are ALL at risk - then I will endeavour to keep these monthly Newsletter/Magazines. Also, don`t forget that I am happy to talk to any member or Branch friend on an evening best between 7 and 8pm - any subject all - but preferably WW1 related - if they are alone, depressed or just want to chat with someone with similar interests - my number is below. Text me, am happy to call back. I am sure with the good sense and social responsibility of our members, friends and society in general, we will come through this trying time.

Take Care

Grant Cullen - Branch Secretary

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Any opinions expressed in this Newsletter /Magazine are not necessarily those of the Western Front Association, Chesterfield Branch, in particular, or the Western Front Association in general

THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION
Registered Charity No 298365



BRANDED GOODS

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**OPEN AS
USUAL**

After a lot of preparatory work and investigation by our Branch Vice Chairman (WFA Branded Goods Trustee) the WFA is now able to dispatch some Branded Goods without the need to go to Post Office (we do this by means of purchasing Royal Mail postage on line)

The Eshop on the Website has been updated. The link to the Website is here

<http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/shop/>

(these details are as under)

Regarding the Covid-19 pandemic please note that only some orders will be accepted

These are:

Clothing items ; These are supplied direct from the Manufacturers

Orders on the following items will be accepted as these can be dispatched via Royal Mail Letter Box (but will only be sent out weekly)

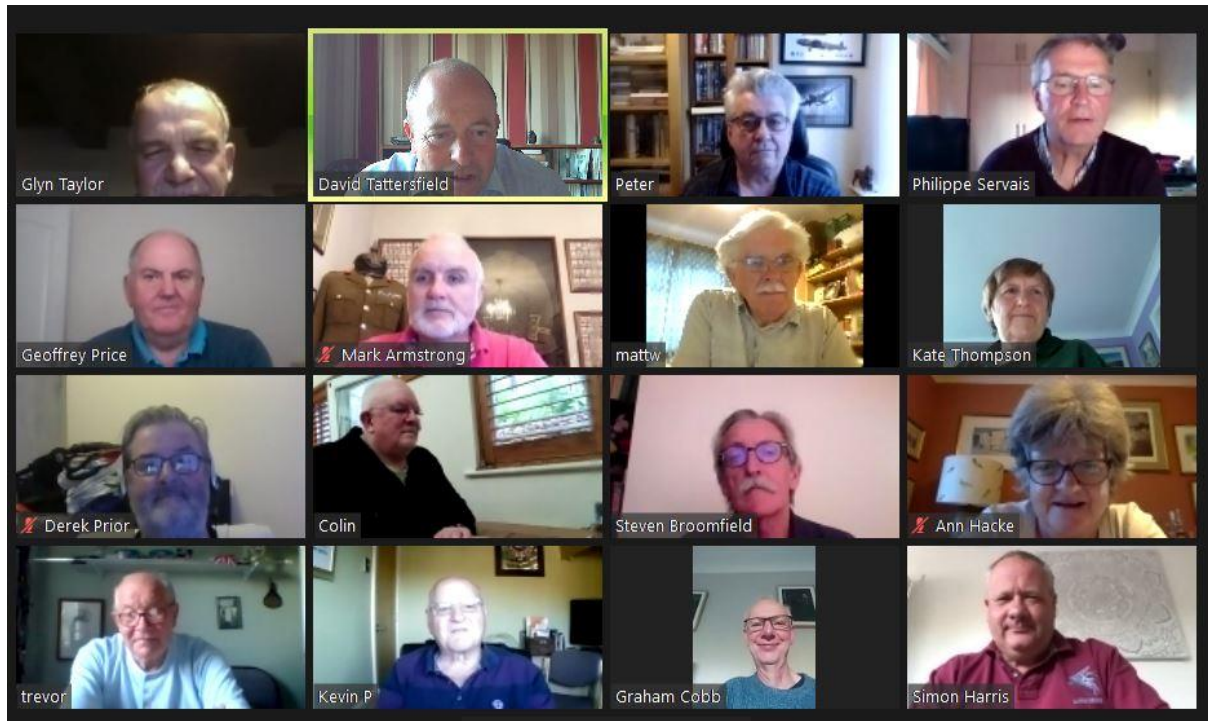
Bookmarks; Baseball Caps ; WFA Classic Ties; Lapel Badges ; WFA Coasters (Special Edition); Mousemats; DVD's (Individual -not sets) ; Stand To Reprints (Vol 3) The following items will not be available until further notice: WFA Mugs; Messenger Bags; Shoulder Bags ;DVD (sets); Binders (Stand To and Bulletin)

No orders will be accepted on these items until the situation is improved, The current thinking is that as such this is likely to endure through to the summer. Apologies for any inconvenience

Mark Macartney | Branded Goods Trustee | The Western Front Association

Dear Branch Members and Friends,

As you may be aware, we have recently been experimenting with a series of interactive members quizzes which have proved very successful. This was undertaken via 'zoom' which enables people to 'meet up' with other participants using a PC, lap top, ipad etc. Please see the attached screenshot of one of these in progress.



These have been able to 'prove the concept' that WFA members would like to participate in 'events' even through the continuing period of lockdown. Whilst quizzes are not to everyone's liking, the demand for these was overwhelming. It clearly showed that WFA members wanted to meet up 'virtually' with other members. Having now proved this concept, I'm keen to develop this (work on this development is ongoing) and encourage branches to undertake similar exercises if they wish to.

These 'events' can be anything you like - quizzes have been tried and are popular, but it's also possible that someone may be willing to give a talk on a Great War subject. It is absolutely possible for these to be visual rather than just straight 'talks'. The software enables users to 'screen share' so visual effects (such as you see with a power point presentation) can be incorporated into these quite easily. Obviously this depends on the speaker being willing to give it a go'.

In order to facilitate this, the WFA have purchased a 'Pro' Zoom account, which enables up to 100 people to participate in a virtual meeting. There is also no limit on the length of time a meeting can last (unlike with the 'free' version of zoom which limits the number of participants and the length of each 'meeting'). This account can be used by any number of branches, there is just a small amount of setting up that's needed.

If you would like to find out more about this - which will hopefully keep WFA members who attended your branch meetings 'engaged' during this period of lockdown, please get in touch.

Best wishes

David
PS ... If you are worried about the complexities of using this, please don't be. It's very easy, and we will also provide a 'how to' video and offer one-to-one training for any branch chairman (or nominated branch official) who wants to explore this for their branch.

David Tattersfield | Development Trustee | The Western Front Association

Rob Thompson has been awarded a Western Front Association Hero Award for his contributions to the WFA over many years.



Rob Thompson has spoken at The Western Front Association AGM and National Conferences as well as speaking at many Branches. In addition, he has provided interesting articles for our journal *Stand To!* and our in-house magazine *Bulletin*, for example his current overview of 1917 'Crossing the Devastated Zone, 1917: Lessons and Consequences for the British Expeditionary Force'.

Rob's talks and articles are always meticulously researched and thought provoking.

He was a fine ambassador in the official Centenary events, interacting with the public at The Somme Experience field in 2016 at Manchester's, Heaton Park and the Zonnebeke experience field in Belgium in 2017. Rob is a natural communicator, and in addition to educating schoolchildren and he has been involved in the official UK teacher education events. Rob is one of the jewels in the crown of The Western Front Association and his award is well deserved.

Upon Receiving an Award for 'Outstanding Services to the Western Front Association' Rob commented:

"I am both astonished and humbled to have received this award from the Western Front Association. Astonished because I am gobsmacked that I have even been considered for such recognition and humbled because there are so many more members who toil away unrecognised and who are far more deserving of this award than I. Ultimately the WFA has given me far more in the way of opportunities and support than I could ever repay. I would like to thank the WFA for all they have done for me over the years as well as the service they have rendered as an organisation in keeping the flame of Great War education and learning brightly burning over the years. It has been a joy and a privilege to be involved and I'd like to thank all past and current members for this honour for which I am truly grateful."

Rob, of course should have been our speaker at the June meeting, however, even without the `lockdown` he would not have been present as he is presently fighting his own war - and winning - against cancer. Those of us who follow his `blog` on Facebook cannot fail to be moved by the courage and good humour that Rob displays despite the unpleasantness - not to mention pain - of his treatment.

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Dear Grant and Tony

Thank you for your latest branch newsletter, which is a monumental piece of work (again) for which I congratulate you. It certainly contains a huge amount of information. However, my main reason for writing is with regard to Tony's piece about the march by the blind veterans in 1920. I had missed this article and will now go and look for it.

This subject is of great interest to me as my grandfather (17964 Philip James D'Hooghe, XX Hussars) lost his right eye in September 1915 aged 18, and in later life was completely blind as his left eye failed. St Dunstan's, the blind veteran's charity, was a Godsend to him, providing him with a braille

watch and a large recorder box which played talking newspapers and a huge amount of support over many years. St Dunstan's is today, Blind Veterans UK, and is a charity that I still regularly support.

His medical and pension records have survived, and are a catalogue of many years of struggle for him to be awarded a decent pension. Fitted with a glass eye, he found work at Boots The Chemist in Nottingham in the shopfitting department but this led to his pension being reduced.

Thanks,

Jonathan D`Hooghe - Chair, WFA Lincoln



Philip James D`Hooghe (sitting) with another soldier



Philip James D`Hooghe back row centre (no hat), Jock Skerrit sitting on ground on right

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Nottingham
Midland Eye
Infirmary January
1919



Philip James D`Hooghe in shirtsleeves.

From Jonathan D`Hooghe, WFA Lincoln, Branch Chair

Andy Rawson has contributed a couple of short articles.....

The Bogus Victoria Cross

We all know the Victoria Cross is the highest award for bravery in the face of the enemy. With it comes result, adulation and financial reward. In the Great War, 628 Victoria Crosses were awarded to 627 men; with Captain Noel Chavasse being awarded it twice. However, on 25 June 1915, Birkenhead magistrates court heard how one man had conned people into thinking he had been awarded the Victoria Cross for personal gain.

Twenty-two-year-old Staffordshire man, Austen Henshall had a chequered career which started with him being discharged after serving three months for false pretences. He then enlisted in the 1st Battalion, Scots Guards, under the alias Private Herbert Bradbury. During his leave in London, he acquired ribbons which looked similar to Victoria Cross and Distinguished Conduct Medal ribbons. He then headed north to Liverpool, where he came from, to start his trail of deception.

Henshall's story was that he had been serving in the 1st Worcesters during the battle of Neuve Chapelle, the previous March. As a member of the Scots Guards, he would know enough about the attack to answer any awkward questions. He befriended an officer in New Brighton, telling him that he had been recommended for the Victoria Cross after carrying his wounded officer, a Captain Goomes, to safety. When pressed further he said that the trauma of the fighting meant that he remembered little more about the incident. All he knew, was the only thirteen men of the 1st Worcesters had answered the roll call the following day.

The trail of deception started with a collection in a New Brighton hotel, which raised 33 shillings. He was then given lodgings by a wounded soldier, who had lost his arm. Henshall convinced a Birkenhead tailor that he needed an overcoat for his trip to London to receive the award from the King at Buckingham Palace. He promised the shopkeeper that he could display the medals on his return, to boost trade.

The fraud came to an end with his arrest in the Welsh seaside town of Rhyl where he was entertained by officers and men of the Welsh Regiment. He was even taken to a recruiting meeting in Chester, where he addressed 700 men.

Henshall had also wooed an admirer. The magistrates heard how she had given him a basket of strawberries labelled for 'my VC hero'. What else she had given him was not mentioned in court. Henshall was found guilty and sentenced to nine months in prison.

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The Ship That Nearly Destroyed Dover

Next time you head to Dover for a visit to the Western Front, take a moment to remember HMS Glatton, the wreck of which is under the ferry terminal car park. If things had turned out differently, Dover would have been wrecked and the BEF would have been left with its logistics route cut, just as it was about to attack the Hindenburg Line, in the final weeks of the war.

Armstrong Whitworth shipyard laid down the keel for HMS Glatton on 26 May 1913. She was launched onto the River Tyne just four days after Britain went to war but there was still plenty of work to be done before she was ready to go into action.

Two ships had been ordered by the Royal Norwegian Navy, to patrol the coastal waters, but they were requisitioned by the Royal Navy on the outbreak of war and renamed HMS Glatton and Gorgon. Modifications to the boilers delayed progress, while construction was suspended for two-and-a-half years while other warships were completed.

Work recommenced in September 1917 and further changes to the design meant that the ship was finally commissioned on 31 August 1918. Glatton was nearly 100 metres long, with huge bulges on her keel to deal with torpedoes, that slowed her to just 12 knots. She was armed with two 9.2-inch guns and four 6-inch guns, while eight anti-aircraft guns provided aerial defence.

A few days after completion, Glatton headed for Dover and had spent just a couple of days in its harbour when disaster struck. On the evening of 16 September a small explosion in one of the 6-inch magazines started a fire which crept towards the rear of the ship. Commander N Diggle and Vice-Admiral Keyes were alerted to the explosion as they strolled long the top of the famous White Cliffs.

Diggle ran down to the harbour side and once on board, flooded the forward magazine. The ammunition ship Gransha was anchored close by and any further explosions could set off a chain reaction which would have flattened Dover. Vice-Admiral Keyes boarded first the HMS Cossack and then the HMS Myngs, giving orders to sink the stricken ship. Four torpedoes later and the Glatton capsized, quenching the fire.

Dover had been saved but sixty men had been killed in the first explosion, while another nineteen had been injured trying to put the flames out. Another 105 sailors had been injured. The Court of Enquiry initially thought an unforeseen design fault had led to the accident. The stokers had been stacking hot cinders against a bulkhead, because they wanted them to cool down before they were removed. Unfortunately, the magazine was behind the bulkhead. The heat from the cinders had warmed up the cork lagging used to suppress sparks around the cordite until it set fire.

The recommendation was to replace the cork with silicate wool. However, the repair team discovered the actual cause of the fire was two types of bad workmanship. Firstly, missing rivets had allowed hot air to enter the magazine. Secondly, missing cork panels had been replaced by newspaper. Either one could have caused the fire.

Salvagers wanted to charge extortionate sums of money to remove the Glatton, once the war was over, so the wreck remained in place for over six years. The Harbour Board eventually blew up the superstructure and removed large amounts of silt over the summer of 1925. It was then necessary to plate up all the holes in the ship and pump in air, to make her buoyant once again. It would take many attempts over the course of the winter before the Glatton had been shifted into a deep gully. By March 1926, the obstruction had been cleared from Dover's harbour.

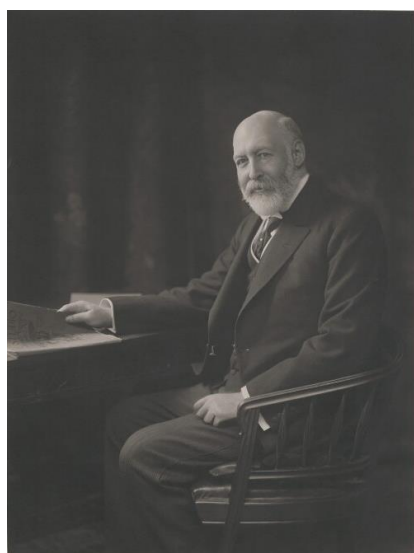
Over the years, the port has expanded and earthworks eventually covered over the rusting hulk. Few visitors to the continent know they are parked above the ship that nearly destroyed Dover, while they wait in the car ferry terminal.

Military Ambulance Trains -

Originally published in 1921 in the book `British Railways and the Great War` (two volumes)

Part Three

By this time (November 1914) the need for more ambulance trains for use by the British forces in France was beginning to be keenly felt, and in December 1914, the War Office asked the Railway Executive Committee to arrange for the supply of sets of specially adapted vehicles which, converted from existing railway stock, and supplemented by ordinary corridor coaches for sitting up cases, could form portions of two ambulance trains for use in that country. One of the sets to consist of two ward cars, two kitchen cars and one pharmacy cars. The cost of each set was defrayed by the flour-millers of the United Kingdom, who had subscribed the necessary funds.



Almost concurrently with this request came another, also from the War Office, for a third set of vehicles, namely four ward cars, two kitchen cars, on pharmacy car and one staff car, the cost of which was met by Lord Michelham (pictured).

The Great Western Railway Company undertook to provide one of the two trains paid for by the flour millers, and the Great Eastern became responsible for the other. The London, Brighton and South Coast Railway supplied the third set of vehicles , with the exception of the staff car. This was sent from the carriage works of the London and North Western.

With the prospect now opened up to them of further, if not continuous demand for ambulance trains for overseas, the Railway Executive appointed the General Managers of the South Eastern and Chatham, and the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway, with the Carriage Superintendents or other officers of the companies concerned and, also, a secretary, as an ambulance Trains for the Continent, Sub-Committee to deal with the construction of ambulance trains for overseas.

This sub-committee was eventually consisted as follows:-

Sir Francis Dent (Chairman) and Sir William Forbes, Railway Executive Committee; Mr FW Marillier, Great Western; Mr HD Earl and afterwards Mr AR Trevithick, London and North Western; MR AJ Hill and Mr.H Parker, Great Eastern; Mr AH Panter, London Brighton and South Coast; Mr. FE Gobey, Lancashire and Yorkshire; Mr W. Pickersgill, Caledonian; Mr. RW Reid, Midland; Mr. AC Stamer, North Eastern; Mr JG Robinson, Great Central; Mr S Warner, London and South Western; Mr. REL Maunsell, South Eastern and Chatham; Mr HN Gresley, Great Northern and Mr HJ Moore (LNWR), Secretary .

One of the first questions the sub-committee had to consider was that of the charges to be made in respect to ambulance trains provided by the railway companies for service overseas and it was agreed to recommend to the Railway Executive - who adopted the proposal - that the basis for such charges should be the cost of replacing existing vehicles, together with that of fitting and of transport to destination, though no payment was to be asked for in respect to rail conveyance.



Ambulance train, 27 August 1914. This train was built at Derby works and is on its way to France

These matters of detail settled, the sub committee next turned their attention to the drawing up of designs for complete standard ambulance trains to be supplied from Great Britain to meet further requirements overseas, experience having shown that, owing to the shortage of available rolling stock, the Railway administrations in France would not be able to provide corridor coaches, for sitting patients, to be added (as originally designed) to sets of ward-cars, pharmacy - cars etc supplied from this side.

In order that the task of designing standard types could be better accomplished, there was formed in France November / December 1914, an Ambulance Train Committee which consisted of one representative of the British Railway Traffic directorate, one British medical officer and one representative of the French Military Railway Authorities. Major AF Hosken, a railway technical officer, acted as secretary of the committee from the middle of 1915.

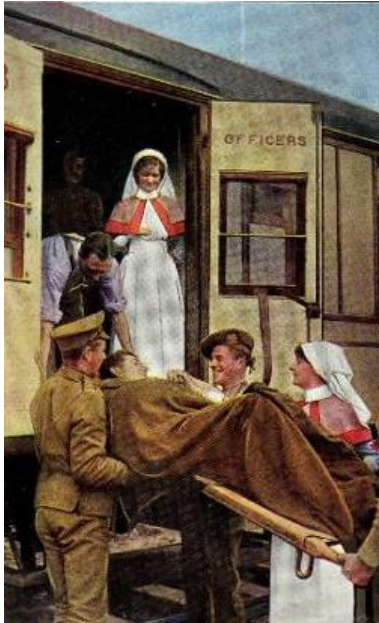
Complete coordination was thus secured between military and medical requirements in France and the technical possibilities of meeting them in England, the standard ambulance train evolved representing the combined wisdom and experience of those concerned alike in this country and overseas. It was composed of sixteen vehicles, namely, one combined brake car for lying infectious cases; one staff car; one kitchen and sick officers car; nine ordinary lying ward-cars, or, alternatively, eight of these and one infectious sitting car; one pharmacy car; one kitchen and mess car; one car for personnel and one brake and stores van. The accommodation provided was: lying down cases, 320; sitting cases 76(at least); staff, 8, and personnel 39, a total of 443, part from train crew, etc.

The ward cars were regarded as the very best that could be arranged from the point of view of simplicity and efficiency. Each of the cars was fitted with thirty-six beds, in tiers of three *. These beds were specially designed by a member of the sub-committee, Mr FW Marillier, Carriage Manager of the Great Western Railway. They could, if necessary, be used as stretchers, but their chief feature was that the cots were capable of being folded against the sides of the coach when the car required cleaning out, while, by lowering the centre cot flush with the side of the coach, the bed nearest the floor was converted into a comfortable seat or couch upon which the patients could sit at ease, the top cots still remaining available for lying down cases.

*Note - for home service ambulance trains each ward car provided for twenty beds, in two tiers

As the result of this facility for converting the cots into seats, the less seriously wounded among the patients were enabled either to sit up or to lie down, as they felt disposed. In this way the sub-committee met still more efficiently, by securing a greater amount of accommodation per car, the point which had already been raised in connection with the ambulance trains for home service - that

even `sitting-up` cases may not be able to sit up throughout the whole of the long journey. The cots thus made full provision for the comfort of both classes of patients. Where, again, this was possible, the cots were so spaced so as to allow of the stretchers being placed direct upon them, the need for removing a dangerously wounded man from the stretcher on which he had been brought into the car being thus avoided. Double doors were provided on each side of every ward car, and as near the centre as possible, to permit of the stretchers being lifted in or taken out conveniently and in the least possible time.



The fact that each train was capable of accommodating approximately 500 persons, all requiring to be fed as well as housed, made it necessary that two kitchens be provided. Each of these, in addition to its complete arrangements for the cooking of food, was capable of supplying fifty gallons of hot water at any time it might be wanted. Drinking water was available from a number of six gallon tanks the taps and lids of which were padlocked. The total supply of water per train for all purposes was about 2500 gallons.

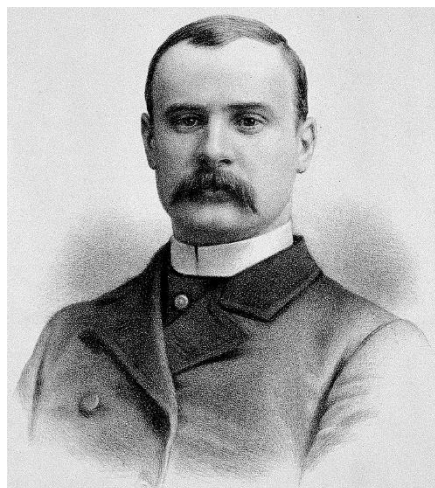
The trains were lighted by electricity, and this they were capable of generating at whatever speed they were travelling. Provision was also made for the plentiful supply of electric fans. As in the case of the home-service trains, the steam-heating applied throughout was supplemented by special arrangements - when the engine had been detached - for the self heating of the coaches in which the staff and personnel lived.

The average length, over buffers, of a standard overseas train for France was 920 feet , without engine and the average empty weight, without engine was 440 tons.

Ambulance trains of the `improved` type (adapted from French rolling stock and consisting of third class carriages gutted and fitted with iron framework to carry stretchers in double tiers; restaurant cars and sleeping cars similarly treated; a goods van turned into a camp kitchen, and another third class coach for the orderlies) were still being added to the available stock, and in his despatch of February 2nd 1915, Sir John French spoke of twelve hospital trains as then running between the front and the various bases.



An early French `improved` ambulance coach



There was, however, need for more , and although some of the later `improvised` trains were, for their type, of an excellent kind - as was testified to at the end of January 1915 by Sir Frederick Treves (left - a prominent British surgeon, and an expert in anatomy. Treves was renowned for his surgical treatment of appendicitis, and is credited with saving the life of King Edward VII in 1902. He is also widely known for his friendship with Joseph Merrick, dubbed the "Elephant Man" for his severe deformities). There was a distinct preference for trains based upon the `standard` designs drawn up by the British sub committee and the Advisory Committee in France.

It was mainly in accordance with these designs that the train presented by Lord Michelham and the two subscribed by the United Kingdom flour millers were planned by the railway companies undertaking to provide them. These three trains were all ready to be sent out in early April 1915, and so also, was the `Princess Christian` ambulance train constructed to the order of the British red Cross Society by the Birmingham Railway Carriage and Wagon Company under the direction of Sir John Furley and Mr. WJ Fielding who had both been associated with the construction of the ambulance train previously described having been sent out to South Africa at the time of the Boer War. Advice in regards to the work was also given by the Ambulance Trains Sub-Committee.

Towards the end of April 1915, the Commander in Chief of the British Forces in France, sir John French, asked for eight more ambulance trains, and the Railway Executive Committee were requested by the War Office to provide them. The construction of these trains was undertaken by the London and North Western (two); the Great Western (two); the Great eastern (one); the Lancashire and Yorkshire (one); the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway (one) and the Caledonian (one). Six additional trains were needed in October 1915. On this occasion the London and North Western undertook to provide two of the six though the company intimated that, in order to do so, it would have to build new stock for the ward-cars and probably also, for the sitting up cases. The Great Eastern was willing to provide one train but would require to build new stock for it throughout. The Great Western could provide two trains, and the Lancashire and Yorkshire one, from existing stock. Arrangements were made for the six trains on this basis.

Subsequent orders included one ambulance train for Salonika, four trains and special vehicles for the Mediterranean Lines of Communication, and one train for Egypt. In view of the difficulty that would arise in landing bogie coaches at Salonika, owing to the small capacity of the only crane available there for lifting them off the vessel in which they would be sent out, the train designed for that destination was made up of four wheeled North London Railway stock. When ready it was sent across to France for temporary use; but, in effect, it never got nearer to Salonika than Italy and it counted as one supplied to the British Forces there.

The train for Egypt (taken from those supplied for the Mediterranean Lines of Communication, another being sent in its place) was required to supplement one that had been built in the workshops of the Egyptian State Railways for the Egyptian Red Crescent Society and presented by that society for the use of sick and wounded soldiers.

The number of ambulance trains for British troops overseas had by the end of the war, been provided by British Railway companies, apart from the `Princess Christian` train, was thirty, with the total number of vehicles supplied, including special coaches and coaches for special purposes, was 518. All, with the exception of about 30, were bogies. In addition to the ambulance trains, the sub-committee undertook to supply the necessary spare parts and materials for their maintenance.

Alexander Murray Drennan - EUSOL

Recent comments in the media about the use of detergents, bleach or other chemicals to fight Corona virus got me thinking, in WW1 there was no antibiotics and many soldiers died from infections, or had to have limbs amputated to avoid death from gas gangrene. This is the story of one man, who, with colleagues developed `EUSOL` - Edinburgh University Solution Of Lime which proved effective at reducing infection and improving healing. EUSOL is still available today, modified by the addition of cheap generic antibiotics, and finds widespread use in parts of Africa, like Nigeria and rural India and Pakistan where proprietary antibiotics have artificially inflated prices.

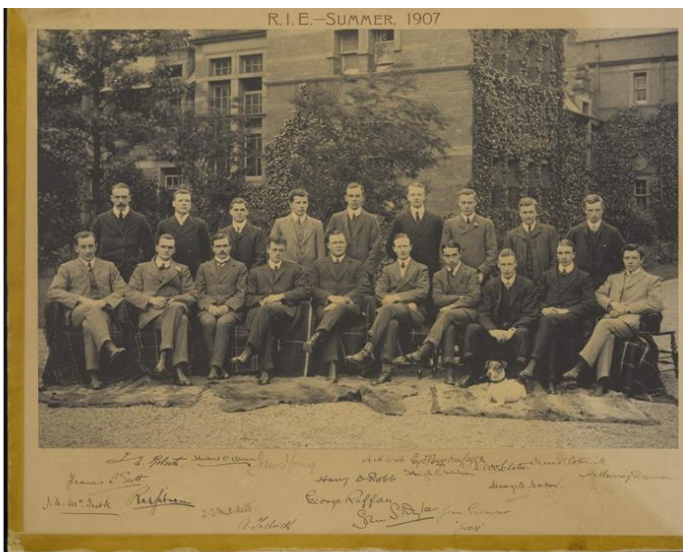
This is Alexander Murray Drennan`s story....

Alexander Murray Drennan - or Murray to his friends - was born in Glasgow on 4th January 1884, and grew up in Helensburgh before coming to Edinburgh in 1901 to study medicine. Murray was a keen letter writer, and his letters to his sweetheart `Nan` (Marion Galbraith, who would later become his wife) give an insight into the life of a young aspiring medical student:

“Our first class begins at 8am so we have to be up betimes in the morning. From 8 to 10 I have anatomy and then at 11 I go over to the Infirmary; nominally we leave there at 1pm but on Operation days, twice a week at least, it is often 3 before I get away as I have the pleasure of being the instrument clerk and as such have to see after the instruments.”

It wasn't all hard work, though. Murray's letters to Nan and his family recount evenings spent at enjoying Edinburgh's cultural offerings

“I went to see Faust on Monday night. It is rather a ‘creepy’ sort of opera but the music is very fine”); attending dinners (“at night there was a complimentary dinner given to Professor Beattie in the Caledonian Hotel ... Beattie was very popular when he was here and no wonder for he was an exceptionally nice man and knew his work thoroughly”) and afternoons spent playing tennis and golf with fellow students as well as professors (“Professor Schafer had the goodness to ask me down to North Berwick to golf with him ... a most enjoyable day’s golf in the most delightful weather. We went back to the house and had tea and then I had just time to get the 6.43 train back”).ht.



Murray Drennan - front row - far right.

After graduating MB ChB in 1906, Murray took up a practical apprenticeship as a Resident of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh. In between visiting patients and supervising the various nurses, clerks, dressers and medical students who attended the wards, the Residents made time to enjoy themselves. In one letter to Nan, Murray related a night out for the `Mess`:



Friday ... evening at 9pm, the Mess having chartered a visitor bus (& driver) set out for Peebles. It created quite a sensation when at the appointed time one of these large buses labelled "Jeffery's Lager" rolled up to the door & we all embarked. The inside was converted into smoking room, saloon bar, while the upper deck was occupied by the sightseers. It was very funny going out Dalkeith Rd, several people tried to get on board thinking it was a public conveyance, needless to say their attempts to mount our machine were not encouraged by word or deed. The run out was delightful as it was a clear warm evening & the road lies through pretty country. We got to Peebles shortly after 11pm & found supper all ready for us at the 'Cross Keys' inn. As usual the Mess meeting was constituted & we did full justice to the repast, reembarking again about 12.40am."

Following his residency Murray stayed close to home, working in the by-now familiar Pathology Department of the University of Edinburgh. When war broke out in 1914, he signed up as an official Pathologist with the Royal Army Medical Corps (R.A.M.C), and in 1915 he had to postpone an imminent appointment as the first full-time Professor of Pathology at

the University of Otago in New Zealand and instead make his way to the R.A.M.C. Depot in Aldershot. In a letter home dated October 1915, he describes some of the men he will serving with and the set-up of their team:

The staff seem all very decent men, one or two are well over forty & must have been in practice. There are several Edinburgh graduates amongst them ... on the whole I think we should work well together ... There are two or three surgical specialists, one medical specialist, several radiologists, several anaesthetists and one bacteriologist ... there is a little man Brown who has done a little in that way & I shall try & get him on to help, but he does not profess much technical knowledge!

In early November 1915 Murray's unit was deployed to Mudros, on the island of Greece. He would later describe how this previously "bare, stony island" was overtaken by military personnel:

As the occupation spread the whole of the harbour side of the island was dotted with tents from Mudros East to Condia on the west. It was a shifting population, today 10000, next week perhaps 60000. The only permanent fixtures, so to speak, being the various H.Q.s, the Base depots and the Hospitals.

To the north a little outside Mudros East were several stationary hospitals situated on a sun-baked flat, and there they bore the burden of the day; blinded with dust and flies and crowded up with cases of dysentery, the staff often sick, they cheerily toiled along. In the neighbourhood also were numerous camps of combatant units; and one bright spot, facetiously known as the "dogs' home", where extra medical officers were kept on the chain and supplied as required to the Peninsula or to units on the island.

Murray's letters home to Nan and their children from this time paint rather a relaxed picture of life in war time. Reading them, one is left with the impression that he only wanted to recount activities that his wife would be familiar with, rather than the full realities of a life in an overseas field hospital. One letter, for example, describes how they spend their evenings:

"After dinner we had our usual games at whist. It is quite an institution and we have played every evening after dinner, always Richards and Thuilliers against the Colonel and me, and so far the games have been very even". In another letter, Murray talks of attending a garden party: *"it was just quiet tea in*

the Fergusons' little garden, a shady spot with palms, & bougainvillea, & such things growing about. ... We had tea & chatted & then left in small batches”.



Murray Drennan in Cairo

By 1915 some of Murray's correspondents had already been stationed abroad for some time, and his incoming letters give insights into some very different military experiences. Murray's younger brother James Stewart Drennan (who had joined the Royal Horse and Field Artillery in 1912) described life in Salonika and a close encounter with a German zeppelin:

It has been beastly hot here again the last few days and we have now chucked working in the middle of the day, instead we lie on our beds in a more or less nude condition and curse the flies, luckily it is still nice and cool at night.

Salonica [sic] had another visit from a Zepp. three or four days ago, just before daylight. All the guns and searchlights in the place got on to it at once and it was brought down before it had a chance of dropping any bombs. It came down in the marshes at the mouth of the Vardar River and the men were captured, so were felt rather bucked at having bagged a Zepp in this corner of the world.

A letter from Tom Graham Brown, physiologist and mountaineer, gives an insight into the life of medical personnel at home:

Write me a decent letter and tell me all your news. I wish I was out there with you. I am at present fixed in this hospital which is one for shock cases - mostly men who are pretty badly shaken or bad mentally after bombardments. Very many of them get well - tho' we get a good many early G.P.I's before they are diagnosed..I wish all the same that I could get out. It isn't any catch being in this country. However I must trust to luck.

Yet another perspective was provided by Dr John Fraser (later Prof. Sir John Fraser, Principal of University of Edinburgh). Dr Fraser was stationed in Northern France, and his letters describe the long, difficult days the staff there endured:

Lately we have been deluged with work: you can probably imagine what Monday was like. I was in the theatre from 10am to 12 midnight, and in that time there were 6 craniotomies: an amputation and 2 gas gangrene: in addition to others. One doesn't feel much inclined for reading or writing after such days.

There were benefits to working in such tough conditions, however. War often brings about significant advances in technology and medicine: as well as the greater incentive to improve the health of fighting forces, the need to take risks and experiment can also increase.

Many of the battles of WW1 took place on muddy farmland, and it could sometimes be days before a soldier was transported to a clearing hospital for comprehensive treatment. This meant the risk of already-traumatic wounds becoming infected was high, with gangrene claiming many lives.

For some time prior to his deployment Murray had been working with colleagues in the Pathology Department at the University of Edinburgh “to find an antiseptic which could be applied as a first dressing in the field to prevent sepsis”, and in 1915 they published a paper in the British Medical Journal on their experiments with ‘Eusol’, or Edinburgh University Solution of Lime. This was a combination of bleaching powder and boric acid, and early experiments both in the wards and in the field showed great success at reducing infection and speeding up healing.

In gathering accounts of these experiments, Murray relied on other colleagues who were using the Eusol treatment. This letter from Dr Fraser sets out the dilemma faced by many front-line surgeons, and his experience using Eusol:

Since I last wrote you I have had a run of gas gangrene cases, all of them I have treated with Eusol and in each case I have been thoroughly satisfied with the result. With one case I was exceedingly impressed. Lt. Col. — had been infected 5 days before admission to the Hospital - on admission there was most gangrene to the lower of the knee: from this knee to the groin there was the gas infection of the tissues which precedes the tissue necrosis. One was faced with three possibilities - 1. Leaving him alone to die 2. Doing a flapless amputation at the hip joint: a mutilating operation from which few recover 3. Amputation through the centre of the thigh, in other words, through the centre of the gas infected area, and risking it.

I chose the last: I did the operation under Special Anaesthesia and as I was doing the operation I remarked that it ought to satisfy the criteria as regards the use of Eusol. I amputated through the thigh and not only so but I made flaps and partly closed the wound, a thing one had never dared to attempt previously... The result was a complete success: no trace of gangrene appeared subsequently.

A further hurdle to be overcome in wartime was the difficulty in communicating such advances. Recognising the delays to the mail that could occur, Murray devised a system for himself and Nan:

I sent off my last to you on Sunday afternoon, & I labelled it no.1 as I explained so that you would know by the number if a letter was missing, of course I have sent several to you before I began the numbering. This is a recapitulation in case you didn't get my last letter.

Murray also kept a small diary in which he recorded letters sent and received - an absolute dream for archivists and researchers!



No such system was in place for the medical men, however, and correspondence over a number of weeks between Murray, J. Lorrain Smith and Fraser details the somewhat arduous process of getting an article published.

I am sorry to have been so lazy in getting this note away, but during the last week the pace of work has increased and although [things are quieter] at present, if I do not get these away now it may be a long while before I have another opportunity.
- Fraser to Drennan, 17 Sep 1915

For the past fortnight I have been cut off from all correspondence and your letter and the manuscript were awaiting me here on my return. I have handed the manuscript to the Colonel and he has approved of it: he forwards it to the DMS [Director of Medical Services] and who if he approves will forward to the War Office: the WO will notify the BMJ or Dr Fletcher to proceed with the publication. The ways of the army are wonderful but there they are! - Fraser to Drennan, 5 Dec 1915



By 1916 Eusol was an established means for treating septic wounds, and even today hypochlorous acid forms a backbone to attempts to accelerate wound healing. After being discharged from service in 1916, Murray was finally able to take up his place in New Zealand, with his wife and children joining him shortly after. They remained there until 1929 when Professor Drennan took up the Chair of Pathology at Queen’s University in Belfast, and in 1932 he returned to his alma mater to take up the Chair at the University of Edinburgh, where he remained until his retirement in 1954. Professor Drennan died in 1984, a few weeks after his 100th birthday.

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Back in December 1989 I made my first trip to the United States having changed jobs in June of that year which brought the prospect of significant foreign travel - indeed I had already spent three weeks in Qatar within the first month of joining the new company. Over the next 25 years I travelled to, and worked in 38 different countries - some many, many times over. This trip to the US brought me to the Greater St Louis area where I was to spend a lot of time over the next few years. The company I worked for had local representation in St. Louis and it was on this first trip that I first met John with whom I worked closely in two steelworks, Granite City Steel and Laclede Steel Inc. Even although I subsequently moved on working for various companies, John and I have remained friends and correspond almost every week by e mail plus the occasional Skype conversation. John`s brother was a Military Policeman and spent time in Vietnam during that War and John has written a short story of his brother`s war experience and how hard he found it to adapt post war.....sounds familiar? I am aware this is not WW1 related, but I thought it would be of interest generally, when you read about our most recent combat veterans, Falklands, the Gulf, Bosnia, Iraq etc, and their experiences once they leave the forces - something I have seen at first hand due to my involvement with the Royal British Legion

Combat Zone Military Policeman

Based on a true story

Most people think of a Military Policeman as having regular police-like duties, patrolling the base, and surrounding towns, responding to an occasional bar fight, looking for AWOL soldiers, etc. That’s kind of what I thought too. I was drafted in April of 1968, at the height of the Vietnam War, and sent to Fort Knox, Kentucky for basic training. I considered myself lucky to be selected for MP training. After my basic and MP training school I was sent to Fort Ord, California and for the next six months, I did just about everything expected of a base MP. It was easy duty—something I could get used to. I even had my wife and two-year-old daughter there with me. Then my luck ran out.

When President Johnson succeeded Kennedy in 1963, he immediately began to escalate the war in Vietnam. It reached its peak in 1968 with about half a million American troops deployed. I was sent to Vietnam in February of 1969 during the Tet Offensive. There I was assigned as a combat MP, and was sent to a forward base in heavy battle zone. Part of my unit’s assignment was to protect our commanding officer and to make sure he stayed alive. Combat MPs were also responsible for escorting convoys through dangerous areas and guarding our base camp’s perimeter in hostile territory. There was nothing safe or glamorous about being a combat MP. While a base MP in Saigon strapped on a colt 45 sidearm he might never use, I carried an M60 machine gun weighing over 20 pounds and used it on

several occasions for self-preservation. At twenty-one years old, I was older than most draftees, which made me eligible for rapid promotion. I achieved the rank of Sergeant during my year

in hell, but I wasn't all that happy about it. Snipers looked for leaders to shoot at first and there were a lot of those bastards hiding out in the jungle.

My bunk-mate in Nam, another MP, was a guy from Texas named Paul Adams. We became good friends. It made my time there a little more tolerable.

One night, I and several other MPs were guarding the perimeter of the camp. It was so dark in our bunker I couldn't see my hand in front of my face. Around 3 am, to help us stay awake, Paul was in the middle of telling one of his tall Texas tales when someone or something got into our tripwires. That set off a bunch of flares that lit up the area, and it suddenly looked like the 4th of July. We were startled into instant action and began shooting with everything we had—machine guns, grenade launchers, you name it. It didn't matter we never saw the perpetrator. This went on for at least 5 minutes—long after the flares went out. Afterward, it was totally silent and pitch dark the rest of the night. Come morning we saw the enemy invader—all shot full of holes and dead as could be. We had managed to kill the hell out of a stray water buffalo. We laughed our butts off, but our commander was pissed. The locals demanded the army pay for the beast since the buffalo was used for work in their fields.

Not long after that incident, Paul went out on patrol with another unit. I was off duty that day. I got a call in the late afternoon from his platoon leader.

"Is this Dan Wilson?"

"Yes, it is," I replied.

"I regret to inform you that Paul Adams was killed by sniper fire while on patrol today. Nearly half our unit bought it during the firefight."

I hung up the phone and sank to the floor. I sat there for hours, staring into space. For me, the war had just gotten real. In the days and weeks that followed, recurring nightmares crept in. I'd wake in a cold sweat night after night. I wasn't sleeping well and I became paranoid. I worried about my squad, worried about my wife and kid back home, and was filled with irrational thoughts. I felt remorse for not being there with Paul that day, and guilt that I was still alive and he was not. I had dreams of Paul being run down by a crazed buffalo and myself bleeding out on a jungle trail. I was going downhill fast but never talked to anyone about it. I held it in because I was a trained soldier in a war zone and had to carry on. I was suffering from guilt and anxiety I didn't understand. It had a name, PTSD, but I didn't know it then.

Things didn't get any better when the 4th Infantry Div. moved to the Central Highlands around An Khe. That area was under heavy attack all the time because it was one of our major supply lines through a narrow pass—an easy target for snipers.

One day, our Company Commander, a full Colonel, needed to be somewhere in a hurry so he went by helicopter. They were one door gunner short, and I got tagged for the duty. It was a one-time thing, but man, I sure wouldn't want to do it again.

Door gunners were exposed as hell, sitting in the open door of a low flying helicopter—one on each side of the craft. I was strapped in with a lap belt and sat behind a 30 caliber machine gun mounted at the edge of the open door. I felt like a sitting duck and the statistics proved it. Door gunners typically had a short life expectancy. Hell, a sniper with an old single-shot rifle could pick us off easily. Our chopper came in low and fast. It was the only thing that made us a little harder target. Bullets ricocheted off the metal just behind my head. I couldn't see where the enemy fire was coming from since the ground foliage was so thick. I fired back without having a real target. After nearly being shot by an unseen enemy, my anxiety and nightmares got worse.

In the midst of all that chaos, the 4th Division conducted a monthly competition designed to raise moral. In July of 1969, I was selected by my company to compete against thirty other soldiers. We sat in front of a group of ranking officers and answered random questions thrown at us. When it was over, I had won the soldier of the month award. My prize was a trip back to the United States with two stops. First, I was assigned to escort a few bad-boy soldiers back to the prison at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and afterward, I got to spend a week at Fort Ord, Ca. with my wife and daughter, which was great.

The personal belongings of an 18-year-old World War One soldier killed in the Somme have been discovered more than 90 years later. Private Ted Ambrose, the eldest of six children, was gravely wounded in the head, arm and leg in an artillery bombardment after he went over the top on 7 July 1916. He was rushed to a hospital in Etaples, 40 miles from Calais, for urgent treatment. His mother wrote to ask to visit him, but the hospital denied permission. Their response is time stamped one hour after Private Ambrose's death. The hospital sent his belongings home to Hertfordshire, including cigarettes and a picture of his girlfriend Gladys. Heartbroken, his mother Sarah hid them inside a brown leather suitcase in the loft, unable to look at it. The 'time capsule' was found 98 years after his death by his great-nephew.

The heart-rending story was revealed by historian Dan Hill ahead of the publication of his book, Hertfordshire Soldiers of the Great War.



1: Button cleaning tool: Enabled buttons to be polished while uniform was worn.

2: Telegrams: One from War Office to Ambrose's mother declining her request to visit him in a field hospital because he was too 'gravely wounded'. The other confirmed his death a few days later.

3: British War Medal: Private Ambrose's posthumous WW1 campaign medal.

4: Scoring Book: Army booklet on how to shoot and maintain your rifle.

5: Another posthumous

6: Locket: Photo of Ambrose and his sweetheart Gladys.

7: Leather pouch (under locket): Used by Ambrose as a purse - the shrapnel was inside it.

8: Brooch: Keepsake given to Gladys by Ambrose. Inscription: 'The Lord watch between me and thee when we are absent one from another'.

9: Cap badge of Private Ambrose's Bedfordshire Regiment.

10: Photograph: Ambrose and comrades at Duke of Bedford's training depot.

11: Lanyard: Cord worn round the neck which may have had identity discs on it (no discs were found).

12: Book (white book under red prayer book): 'What a British soldier wants to say in French'.

13: Prayer book.

14: Ten hand-rolled cigarettes in a case.

15: Shrapnel: Two fragments of German shell that fatally wounded Ambrose.

16: Cigarette papers.

17: Regimental pin badge.

18: Letters from his father and letters



The brown leather suitcase contained his old pipe, which still had tobacco inside



It also had a picture of his grieving mother Sarah. Private Ambrose is pictured above. He died after sustaining wounds on the frontlines in 1916

The suitcase, which had remained sealed for decades, contained the soldier's most prized possessions including a letter from his father Samuel, a farm bailiff, wishing him luck, his pipe with burnt tobacco still inside and a photo of his mother.

A brooch and letter from Gladys, unused cigarettes and a French language guide for the Expeditionary force were also found inside along with fragments of a shell, probably kept as a 'keep sake' from a near miss on the frontline.

His mother also hid medals he received in the suitcase, after they were given to him posthumously in the 1920s.

Private Ambrose had come to the frontline with the 6th Bedfordshire regiment following nine months of training.

Once there, his eardrums were perforated after a shell exploded nearby. He was moved to hospital and, just before his return, contracted German measles leading to a longer hospital stay before returning to the front on July 1.

On the day he was hit in the massive bombardment, 100 men in his regiment were killed or injured.

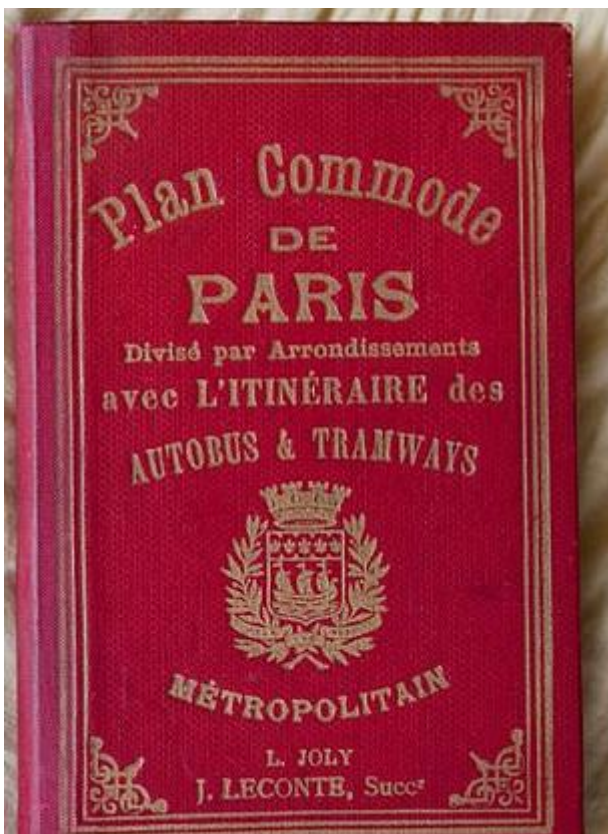
His body was buried the day after his mother wrote to see him, at a cemetery outside the Etaples hospital.



The case also contained a brooch from his girlfriend Gladys. He died in Etaples after sustaining injuries to his head, leg and arm during an artillery bombardment in the Somme



Private Ambrose is pictured above with the 6th Bedfordshire regiment where he served



My Dear Mr and Mrs
 I now take the
 pleasure in answering of you nice
 letter that I got yesterday as I
 ought to of answered it before I had
 sent you a card to say I am
 quite well and hope you are all
 the same and to say I had your
 letter with I enjoyed your card
 very much as I just finished it
 yesterday I made this on last
 longer and I enjoyed it it was very
 nice with how is Emily Willie and
 Grandmother did they come and
 see you I wish I was there
 so as I could see them once
 again as it seems a long time

The case also contained a book showing how to navigate Paris and a heartfelt letter sent by the private to his parents in Hertfordshire

The case of possessions was inherited by his sister Margaret and then passed on to her sons John and David. The family decided to open it in 2014 after seeing an appeal by the Herts at War project to make an exhibition marking the 100th anniversary of the conflict.

John from Letchworth, Hertfordshire, said: 'It was only when we opened the case that we realised the extent of the archive. It is very moving, especially the letters.'

Revealing the story, Mr Hill said: 'Ted was not a famous soldier. He did not perform some uncommon act of gallantry which is remembered today.

'He was an ordinary lad from a sleepy village in Hertfordshire who simply did his duty. Whenever I go to France and pass by Etaples, I always remember to stop and say hello.'